

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-20

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SUBJECT: PRESIDENT CALDERA'S MESSAGE TO CONGRESS REPORTING
HIS FIVE YEARS STEWARDSHIP

1. I ATTENDED THE SPECIAL SESSION OF CONGRESS WHICH LISTENED TO PRESIDENT CALDERA'S TWO-HOUR SPEECH REPORTING HIS MANDATE OVER THE PAST FIVE YEARS AS PRESIDENT OF VENEZUELA. SPEECH, ALTHOUGH AT TIMES IT READ LIKE SOMETHING OF A PARAPHRASE OF "THE STATISTICAL ABSTRACT OF THE UNITED STATES," WAS DELIVERED WITH HIS USUAL ORATORICAL SKILL AND KEPT ITS AUDIENCE AWAKE. IN THIS EFFORT IT WAS MUCH ASSISTED BY A CLAQUE OF COPEYANO ADHERENTS WHO OCCUPIED THE ENTIRE THIRD BALCONY OF THE SENATE HOUSE AND WHO, ON CUE, RESPONDED BY FOOT STAMPING, VIOLENT SHOUTS OF "CALDERA, CALDERA, CALDERA*" AND THUNDEROUS APPLAUSE.

2. CALDERA'S SPEECH SHOULD FORM A USEFUL COMPENDIUM FOR INR AND THE VENEZUELAN DESK IN TRACING OUR VENEZUELA'S ECONOMIC AND
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SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT OVER THE PAST HALF DECADE. HIS STATISTICS

(IF CORRECT) ARE IMPRESSIVE IN SHOWING A VAST AMOUNT OF PROGRESS. HE DID NOT, HOWEVER, AT ANY TIME CLAIM PARTISAN CREDIT FOR HIS PARTY.

3. PURPOSE OF THIS TELEGRAM IS TO GIVE MY OWN PERSONAL IMPRESSIONS OF CALDERA'S REMARKS IN SO FAR AS THEY AFFECT RELATIONS WITH THE UNITED STATES:

A. WITHOUT ANY DIRECT REFERENCE TO ANY COUNTRY, CALDERA SAID THAT VENEZUELA HAD TOO LONG SUFFERED FROM DISCRIMINATION IN THE EXPLOITATION OF ITS PETROLEUM RESOURCES. HE CONTRASTED THE PRICE OF OIL AT THE BEGINNING OF 1973 WITH THE CURRENT PRICE IN JANUARY 1974. HE MADE A RINGING DECLARATION THAT VENEZUELA'S OIL RESOURCES WOULD BE EXPLOITED BY VENEZUELAN, WITH A SIDE REFERENCE TO THE PROBABILITY THAT CONGRESS, TO WHOM HE WAS ADDRESSING HIS SPEECH, WOULD DECIDE BEFORE THE EFFECTIVE DATE OF THE REVERSION LAW TO NATIONALIZE THE PETROLEUM INDUSTRY. CALDERA ALSO REPEATED HIS STANDARD ARGUMENT THAT DEVELOPING COUNTRIES IN GENERAL AND OIL PRODUCING COUNTRIES IN PARTICULAR HAD BEEN EXPLOITED BY "THE COLONIALISTS" WHILE AT THE SAME TIME THEY RECEIVED LOW PRICES FOR THEIR RAW MATERIALS THE "COLONIALISTS" GOUGED THEM WITH HIGH PRICES FOR IMPORTED MANUFACTURED GOODS. HE GOT LOUD CHEERS WHEN HE SAID THAT THE LARGEST PETROLEUM RESERVE IN THE WESTERN HEMISPHERE IS THE ORINOCO TAR BELT AND THIS WOULD "BE DEVELOPED ONLY BY VENEZUELAN AND FOR VENEZUELAN WITHOUT ANY OUTSIDE INTERVENTION."

B. MOST OF THE SPEECH WAS DEDICATED TO DOMESTIC AFFAIRS. HOWEVER, AT THE END CALDERA BROUGHT UP FOREIGN RELATIONS. HE REEMPHASIZED VENEZUELA'S DESIRE TO MAINTAIN FRIENDLY RELATIONS WITH ALL NATIONS BUT IN RECAPITULATION SAID THAT DURING THE FIVE YEARS OF HIS REGIME CERTAIN ACTS HAD BEEN WORTHY OF PARTICULAR NOTE. THE FIRST WAS THE PROTOCOL OF PORT OF SPAIN, WHICH SHOWED THAT VENEZUELA BORE NO ANIMOSITY TOWARD ITS NEIGHBORING COUNTRY GUYANA. THE SECOND WAS VENEZUELA'S OUTWARD THRUST TOWARD THE CARIBBEAN IN POSITIVE TERMS. HE SAID, "FORMER TENSE RELATIONS WITH CUBA HAVE BEEN EASED." HE CITED THE LONG CONTINUING DISPUTE WITH COLOMBIA OVER THE CONTINENTAL SHELF AND TERRITORIAL SEA; BUT SAID THAT DURING RECENT MONTHS, IN FACT THE PAST YEAR, HE AND PRESIDENT PASTRANA HAD COME NOTABLY CLOSER TO AN AGREEMENT ON LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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BASIC PRINCIPLES. HE LIKewise EXPRESSED OPTIMISM THAT VENEZUELA AND THE NETHERLANDS ANTILLES COULD REACH AN AMICABLE SETTLEMENT OVER SUCH DIFFERENCES THEY MIGHT HAVE CONCERNING THE CONTINENTAL SHELF BETWEEN VENEZUELA AND THE NETHERLANDS ANTILLES. CALDERA ALSO PAID SPECIAL ATTENTION TO VENEZUELA'S ENTRY INTO THE ANDEAN PACT, WHICH HE LINKED WITH HIS "HISTORIC TRIP TO THE OTHER SISTER NATIONS OF SOUTH AMERICA."

C. CALDERA'S LOUDEST CHEER FROM HIS APPOINTED CLAQUE CAME WHEN HE SAID THAT HE HAD FOUND IT NECESSARY TO DENOUNCE THE U.S- VENEZUELAN RECIPROCAL TRADE AGREEMENT. THE HIRED HANDS ABOVE IN THE THIRD BALCONY, BUT ALSO THE DEPUTIES BELOW, STOOD UP AND APPLAUDED WHEN HE MADE THIS STATEMENT. THERE WAS NO RESPONSE WHEN HE ADDED, AS THE TEXT WILL READ, THAT THIS ACTION ON THE PART OF HIS GOVERNMENT HAD BEEN TAKEN FOR THE PURPOSE OF REGAINING AUTONOMY IN RESTRUCTURING CUSTOMS TARIFFS AND THAT IT HAD NO, REPEAT NO, INIMICAL INTENTIONS TOWARDS THAT GREAT FRIENDLY POWER TO THE NORTH, THE UNITED STATES.

D. AT THE END OF THE TWO-HOUR SPEECH, MINISTERS OF CALDERA'S CABINET FILED UP TO THE ROSTRUM AND HANDED BOOKS TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE, GONZALO BARRIOS, GIVING AN ACCOUNT OF THEIR STEWARDSHIP OVER THE PAST FIVE YEARS. ALTHOUGH CALVANI, AS FOREIGN MINISTER, GOT SOME APPLAUSE, CURIEL AS MINISTER OF PUBLIC WORKS (WHO COULD SCARCELY LUG THE FIVE VOLUMES REPORTING HIS ACHIEVEMENTS) GOT MORE OF AN OVATION. THE MINISTER OF JUSTICE GOT NO RESPONSE AT ALL--BUT HIS BRIEF WAS VERY BRIEF. I WAS AMUSED WHEN THE MINISTER OF MINES AND HYDROCARBONS, PEREZ LA SALVIA, CAME UP WITH HIS TWO VOLUMES WHICH EVOKED A STORM OF APPLAUSE FROM THE COPEYANO CLAQUE AND A STANDING OVATION OF BOTH HOUSES OF VENEZUELAN CONGRESS. FROM THE REFLECTIVE SMILE ON CALDERA'S FACE, I THOUGHT HE MUST HAVE BEEN RECALLING WHAT HE TOLD ME TWO WEEKS AGO PRIVATELY--"I INVENTED PEREZ LA SALVIA."
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